

Dear Mr. Allen:

On 10 September 1959, an article authored by Mr. Mark Waters on the subject of the Air Force U-2 aircraft and its appearance in Hawaii, appeared in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. This article was subsequently transmitted by the United Press International and has since been brought to my attention through inquiries by various press members seeking confirmation or additional information.

I have just completed a review of the article in question and am rather alarmed at the number of discrepancies that appear in Mr. Waters' story when I compare some of his statements with official Air Force records. As you are undoubtedly a person of integrity with a sincere desire to have your newspaper reflect a like quality, I am alerting you to the existence of these discrepancies.

First of all, I would like to repeat the stated mission of the Hawaiian based U-2 aircraft. It was dispatched to Hawaii at the direction and under the control of the Air Research Development Command to assist in the recovery phase of the DOD/NOVA satellite Program. Its mission has never been a matter of secrecy. It did, however, contain extremely sensitive measuring devices which, in order to properly function, had to be maintained under controlled conditions. Much of this equipment is experimental and has been classified, for the present, in the interest of National security. The aircraft, on the other hand, is not a classified vehicle and was most certainly not painted a mysterious black, as Mr. Waters would have your readers believe. It was metallic in finish and carried the standard Air Force markings. Further, aircraft do not ride the wing tips preparatory to take-off for this would be a suicidal mission. I must admit, however, words of this nature do supply color to Mr. Waters' story.

Since acquiring the U-2, the Air Force has restricted its use of the vehicle to programs within the Western Hemisphere. An Air Force U-2 has never been operational on the Island of Formosa as implied by Mr. Waters. Aside from the recent visit to Hawaii, the only mission of an Air Force U-2 outside the continental limits of the United States has been to participate in a joint United States/Argentine upper atmosphere sampling program. The objective of that program was to determine the degree of atomic contamination, if any, in the atmosphere and to conduct studies of any concentration of such contamination both North and South of the equator. The Honolulu Evening Post recently completed a series of articles on this very subject including a reference to the participation of the U-2 aircraft.

As far as the balance of Mr. Watson's story, I have no reason for comment. To do so would be a challenge to the entire freedom of the American press. I can only observe the untruths which could only have been stated to give color to a personal opinion. I make this observation only because I believe such deliberate disinformation can be harmful to the industry and to our Nation.

If I have in any way offended you or the Star-Bulletin in expressing what was intended as constructive criticism, please accept my apologies. I sincerely hope that on the occasion of the next visit to Hawaii of the Air Force U-2, the assistance it will be rendering to a scientific program will be more accurately reported in the Hawaiian press.

Most sincerely,

ALDO R. LIEBHAFSKY  
Major General  
USAF